

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00436 210614Z

20

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 210548Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2197

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0436

EXDIS

D/PW FOR SIEVERTS

DEPT PASS SECDEF WASHDC; CINCPAC HONOLULU HI;
CDR JCRC NKP; CDR JCRC CP SAMAE SAN THAI

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CASC, LA

SUBJECT: AMCIT CHARLES M. DEAN

1. AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR BORTHWICK TOLD ME TODAY THAT HE MET WITH FONMIN PHOUMI VONGVICHIT ON 20 JANUARY TO INTRODUCE MR. GOSS, THE NEW AUSTRALIAN DEPUTY SECRETARY OF FONAFF FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN THE COURSE OF THIS MEETING, THE DEAN/SHARMAN CASE WAS DISCUSSED AND PHOUMI STATED THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION REGARDING THESE INDIVIDUALS. PHOUMI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE VERY MUCH HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE GOOD NEWS WITH REGARD TO THESE MEN BUT THAT IF THE NEWS WERE "BAD" HE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD NOT AFFECT LAO RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA.

2. AMBASSADOR BORTHWICK STATES THAT HE REPLIED THAT IF THE PATHET LAO HAD DONE AWAY WITH THESE YOUNG MEN IN ORDER TO AVOID THE POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT OF ADMITTING THAT THEY WERE PATHET LAO PRISONERS, THIS WOULD INDEED HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON LAO/AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS.

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3. IT WAS BORTHWICK'S IMPRESSION THAT DESPITE THE SOMEWHAT MACABRE TENOR OF THIS CONVERSATION, PHOUMI DID NOT HAVE ANY INFORMATION WHATSOEVER WITH REGARD TO THE DEAN CASE. HE THEORIZES THAT PHOUMI WAS MERELY PREPARING FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT DEAN AND SHARMAN HAVE, IN FACT, DIED. WE SHARE BORTHWICK'S VIEW THAT THIS RATHER SPECULATIVE STATEMENT BY PHOUMI SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

4. BORTHWICK WAS GIVEN A COPY OF OUR LATEST LETTER TO PHOUMI (VIENTIANE 0430) AND AT OUR SUGGESTION AGREED TO WRITE A LETTER TO PHOUMI CONFIRMING THAT THE AUSTRALIAN AND U.S. EMBASSIES ARE RECEIVING DETAILED INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO THE PRESENCE IN PATHET LAO HANDS OF DEAN AND SHARMAN AND THAT HE SHARES OUR DISAPPOINTMENT THAT NOTWITHSTANDING THE AMOUNT OF DETAILED INFORMATION PROVIDED THE PATHET LAO, THEY HAVE FAILED TO RESPOND TO OUR INQUIRIES.

5. FOR CANBERRA. AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, AMBASSADOR BORTHWICK IS NOT VERY DYNAMIC AND IS CURRENTLY CONVALESCING FROM A BOUT OF MALARIA. IT APPEARS TO US THAT VIENTIANE 0117, VIENTIANE 0213 AND VIENTIANE 0430 MIGHT WELL BE USED TO ENCOURAGE THE AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY HERE WITH REGARD TO THIS CASE.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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